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ABSTRACT

The English and Spanish scripts of a dialogue between two Hispanic Americans are presented. The brief drama was recorded on videotape, available separately, for use in instructional television. The story illustrates the frustration and anxiety some Hispanics feel while striving for a better life in the United States. A confrontation occurs between the two characters, who represent positive and negative feelings about overcoming the obstacles to learning to speak English. Issues addressed include the following: (1) lack of opportunity for individuals not able to speak English; (2) embarrassing or dangerous situations encountered; (3) attitudes about discrimination; (4) need for literacy; and (5) how to get help. The dialogue is followed by a lesson plan whose objectives are affective change and vocabulary development. The lesson consists of a vocabulary list and five activities, including discussion questions, a goal-setting exercise, role-playing, a peer interview, and creation of a dialogue. Followup activities are suggested. Notes on the origins of the materials and on the author are also provided. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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Region IV Education Service Center

presents

TO LEARN OR NOT TO LEARN

written by

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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Dedication

This material
is dedicated to the men and women
who strive to become self-reliant;
full participants in America's great experiment,
democracy,...
...and to the teachers who help them!

Acknowledgements

Many people have helped to produce this material. We would especially like to thank the adult education staff Ruth Sanchez, Acquanetta Johnson and Tina Corey for their efforts in the office. Also the computer graphics work of Vicki Phillips contributed greatly to the success of this project.

To William McKinney, Barry Tacker and Michael Owens and their support from the Service Center. To Sherri Southern and Dennis Gifford and the people in the Instructional Television department at the Service Center for their patience and assistance. To Linda Blount for her vision in the use of video technology as a meaningful way to reach adults. To Pavlos Roussos at the Texas Education Agency for his enthusiastic support. To the state committee for State Legalization Impact Assistance Grants who gave us the last push we needed to finish the project.

Introduction - English Version

We are experiencing times where Hispanics who reside in the United States are rapidly becoming one of the fastest growing minorities. In spite of various significant achievements and important historic participation by Hispanics in this country, we still are encountering serious problems. Among these is education and it is precisely why we welcome you to this presentation of "To Learn or Not to Learn."

This story represents the frustration and anxiety that some Hispanics feel while striving for a better life in the United States of América.

Here we'll see a confrontation between Pepe and Toño who represent the positive and negative aspects of those who desire to learn to speak English.

Perhaps you can identify with the life of these two persons, with the obstacles and problems that arise. These may possibly be those which impede you from developing and attaining triumph in your life.

This short play offers an exceptional message that can be used by all who seek a better life.

We invite you now to enjoy and receive valuable information concerning education in this interesting drama entitled:

"To Learn or Not to Learn"

Introducción - Spanish Version

Estamos pasando por una época en que el Hispano que radica en los Estados Unidos pronto se convertirá en una de las minorías mas sobresalientes. A pesar de varios importantes logros y la participación histórica por Hispanos en este país, todavia tenemos serios problemas. Uno de ellos es la educación.

Es precisamente porque le damos la bienvenida a la presentación "To Learn or Not to Learn." Este drama representa la frustración y ansiedad que algunos Hispanos sienten al buscar una vida mejor en los Estados Unidos de América.

En esta escena vamos a presenciar la confrontación entre Pepe y Toño, dos personajes que representan el lado positivo y negativo de personas que quieren aprender el idioma Inglés.

Quizá usted puede identificarse con la vida de estas dos personas y con los obstáculos y problemas que ellos enfrentan. Posiblemente, son los que le impiden a desarrollarse y alcanzar el triunfo en su vida.

Este drama ofrece un mensaje excepcional que puede ser utilizado por toda persona que busca una vida mejor.

Ahora prepárese para ver y recibir valiosa información acerca de la educación en este interesante drama titulado:

"Aprender o no Aprender"

To Learn or Not to Learn

Characters

Pepe ..... Lupe Cásares

Toño..... Gustavo Fuentes

Written by ..... Lupe Cásares

Directed by ..... Lupe Cásares
Mitchell Hall

Produced in cooperation with
Bracero Troupe
Education Theatre

Region IV Education Service Center
Instructional Television

To Learn or Not to Learn
English Translation

Pepe: It's already 8:00. Get up.

(Dries face)

Pepe: It's 8:00 - get up or you're going to lose your ride.

Toño: Let me sleep a little bit more.

(Toño enters room.)

Toño: You're mean man! You woke me up in the middle of a dream. Lucía Mendez was going to give me a kiss.

Pepe: That's the end result when you stay up late watching those miserable soap operas that leave you nothing constructive in your life - just illusions.

Toño: Which soap operas? Do you really think I'd miss Veronica Castro's show?

Pepe: Look - those hours that you spend illusioned by the soaps, you should use them to study to better yourself. You spend so many hours remembering. I'm not even sure of what!

Pepe: Is this my newspaper?

Toño: No it's mine.

Pepe: What are you reading?

Toño: La Subasta, it's a newspaper for the Hispanics. Why? what's

wrong with it?

Pepe: There's nothing wrong with it except you don't use it constructively as I use mine.

Pepe: I started learning word by word and now I'm able to read an entire story. Also, the information contained here helps me become aware of what's happening in my surroundings and in the entire world.

Toño: The satanic cut off his Mother-in-law's head because she refused to buy him some beer.

Pepe: It's just that you don't understand that the newspaper talks about wild things in order to sell them and people use them as a mean to escape from reality. There is no benefit for us in those stories. We must use the information to progressively help ourselves.

Toño: We have our own means of communication. Besides, I don't need to learn how to speak English. I'm not about to starve to death. If I need to buy something, the businesses that I go to all speak Spanish.

Pepe: But that's not what it's all about. We came all this way to better ourselves and we should utilize all resources to improve ourselves. For instance, look at this important headline, "Gorbachev visits the White House."

Toño: What do I care if Gorbachev visits the White House. Now if Olga Briski were to visit the White House or Iris Chacon, the bombshell of Puerto Rico!

Pepe: You make a special effort to retain your old ways and other hang-ups that are even destructive. But if we came this far it was to seek new opportunities and horizons.

Toño: OK. You're talking about opportunities. Well, here's one; $3.35 an hour to mow yards. You don't need to speak English.

Pepe: No, of course not - you don't need to speak English nor be prepared mentally. All you need is to be able to endure the tremendous sun when you're out on that job.

Pepe: Hey, look at this statistic, 10 million Hispanics in the U.S. and 49% percent of them don't know how to speak English.

Toño: What dumb people!

Pepe: No, It's not that we're dumb. It's just that we lack the information. There's a guy out there who's selling to our people without a contract.

Toño: It's the people's fault. They shouldn't be giving money in advance.

Pepe: It's because we lack the knowledge to interpret contracts. On the other side of town there's this guy who's selling used cars in the barrio. People go to him only because it has a sign outside that says "We Speak Spanish." He sells them these cars that sometimes don't even make it around the block. They always look to the barrio when they want to deceive people.

Toño: Let's suppose I wanted to go to those English classes that you've been talking about. How am I going to get there? I don't have transportation.

Pepe: Oh sure when it comes to class you suddenly don't have transportation - but when it comes to your Friday night dances you sure have a way of getting there.

Toño: You really think I'm going to miss those dances? Even if I were to get educated, I won't have a chance. The best jobs go to the Anglos.

Pepe: Oh no you're not going to all of a sudden become a vicim of discrimination and I'm not saying there's no discrimination. It's a disease, a plague that has infected the entire world. The question is - How do we use it? Don't use discrimination as a crutch. Look at it in a positive, constructive way. In spite of the fact that they discriminate against us, we're going to conquer. That's the positive aspect.

Toño: Yeah - A lot of English - pure dreams I know someone who has been living here 28 years and he still doesn't know a word of English. You know one time I went to a restaurant and I asked where the bathroom was and she said they were going to call the police and take me off to jail.

Pepe: You asked her where the bedroom was. There's the problem- bedroom is where you sleep. Bathroom is lavatory. She thought you were asking her to go to bed with you. That's why she called the police.

Toño: It's just that a person tries to speak English and the pronunciation doesn't come out right.

Pepe: That shouldn't be an obstacle for us. If we learn a new word we should immediately implement in our new job. I respect people who decide to take a risk and go beyond our boundries and just try to speak the language. That's something I can't credit you with. You have refused to come to class with me.

Toño: I don't want to be pressured. I'll make up my own mind, I'll know when it's right for me. For now, I'm O.K.

Pepe: Well, It's really up to you. But if I try to help you it's because

we're friends from the old country. You seem to think differently from me. Maybe I should give up.

Toño: Look, with what I'm making I'm surviving. As long as I have enough to buy beans, that's fine with me.

Pepe: That's precisely the source of your problem. You're a conformist. You satisfy yourself with the status quo when we should try to improve ourselves. And we shouldn't wait for anyone to deliver it to us on a silver platter. We need to go for it ourselves.

So I think I'll head for my job. But in the meantime you were talking about employment. Here's something. It says employment - position available.

Toño: You think you're too good because you're working in a restaurant as a waiter. I can almost see you acting like the perfect slave. Can I help you madam? More tea? Thank you. Come again. It's still a servants job. It's only because you know a few words in English.

Pepe: What about you in construction, with all that heat, you're lucky you haven't caught rabies.

Toño: Leave me alone. It's up to me to learn or not to learn.

Pepe: I know, but that's why you come home complaining at night. They fired José. They may fire Victor tomorrow. And me? I don't know when they will fire me. And that's because you don't make use of the opportunities available to you. That's a way you could gain respect.

Toño: Why don't you just leave. Go to your job!

Pepe: I am, but not before I tell you what you're missing. There's a

position here available. It's for a supervisor to be supervising a group of persons. This is interesting. They are paying $14 an hour.

Toño: $14 an hour. That's what I make in an entire day! What else does it say?

Pepe: Person must be bilingual.

Toño: What does that mean?

Pepe: You have to know how to speak both languages.

Toño: Well with those requirements, who's going to qualify? Maybe the president's son!

Pepe: No not necessarily. This is an offer for someone that is striving to get educated. Maybe even me!

Toño: You're always dreaming Pepe. You would never get it.

Pepe: No, I'm not dreaming. What's happening here is that I think positively and you think negatively.

Pepe: Why shouldn't I take advantage of this position. After all, I paid the price as I struggled to make it to class everyday. And just to make a point before going to the restaurant, I'll go and apply for the job.

Toño: Well I bet you're not going to get it. They're going to give it to a U.S. citizen.

Pepe: There are many opportunities. Don't think negatively. You are always thinking negatively. I'm going to take advantage of the opportunity. I'll probably get selected. Those who achieve victories are those who dare to go for them. Well, I'm leaving.

Don't forget to take your coat. Cold weather is forcasted. It's going to be cold working out there in construction.

Toño: How am I supposed to learn when I can't even read or write in Spanish? I wish I could be the one going for that job that says $14 an hour. I'm tired of my pressing job. It's the same thing every week for the minimum wage, withstanding all the harsh conditions. It's been 9 years of the same thing. And that's not all. It's been hard to communicate with my family. Last Christmas my daughter asked me why I never write home like the other fellows do to their wives. How can I do that when I can't write? My parents were always poor. They never had enough to allow me to get an education. If I had at least had the opportunity to get an education, maybe things would be different. But it wasn't like that. The last time I tried to get a better job and they asked me to fill out an application, I took it home instead to hide the fact that I'm illiterate. But I have to do something for me and for my family. There must be an address here of some school that Pepe left behind. Here's something. What's the use. I can't even read.

Pepe: Hey buddy, have you seen my keys? I left without them. Man I almost got bitten by a dog when I was trying to get into the car.

Toño: I haven't seen them.

Pepe: So what's bothering you?

Toño: I'm all right.

Pepe: Well look if there's something that I can help you with let me know because were buddies.

Toño: Really, would you help me?

Pepe: Well yeah. Is there some emergency?

Toño: I have something to confess. We've been sharing this apartment for 9 years. And I've never told you that I'm an illiterate.

Pepe: And what about all those stories you talked about from the newspaper?

Toño: I was bluffing. I would ask all my other buddies on the job and they would read them for me and then I would just memorize them.

Pepe: Well I didn't want people to know about it. I felt embarrassed and I didn't want anybody pointing their finger at me. There goes the illiterate. I preferred to hide it and just fool everyone, but I can't stand it anymore. I have to do something about it. You have more information than I do. What can I do?

Pepe: First of all, I don't want you to feel inferior. There's no crime in being illiterate. Here in this country, in this powerful country, there are natives who like you can't even read nor write.

Toño: You mean to tell me there are some Anglos who are like me and don't even know how to read or write?

Pepe: The real crime is to live a life of ignorance and to not try to improve yourself. The good thing is that you are now recognizing it and you want to improve yourself.

Toño: Do you think people are going to make fun of me?

Pepe: Why should they? Everyone is an adult and they're all there for the same purpose, to improve themselves.

Toño: You really think I can learn to read and write in Spanish?

Pepe: Why sure. I should have the directory somewhere around here and look, I found my keys. But the real key is here - the educational opportunities.

Toño: So you think once I learn to read and write in Spanish, I could try to learn to read and write English?

Pepe: Well, of course. The idea is to first learn your own language and then proceed to learn the English language.

Toño: I can just see it now. Writing to my wife, "Hello, darling."....

Toño: You're absolutely right Pepe. We have to face the realities in life and go forward to achieve our goals.

Pepe: Look, if you're really serious about the classes, you can lay down your hard hat. You won't be needing it anymore.

Toño: What about your appointment?

Pepe: That job can wait and after these classes there will be many opportunities for both of us.

Toño: So, no more construction? Better opportunities?

Pepe: Of course. It's all within your reach.

Conclusion

We certainly hope you have enjoyed "To Learn or Not to Learn". Several important points were presented. The need for education and the barriers to getting an education are items which can now be discussed in class.

We hope you will internalize the positive attitudes dramatized by Pepe. This will help your endeavors to develop and improve yourself through education.

We wish you well in your efforts as you take your place in society.

For now,

Good luck and much success.

Conclusión

Esperamos que les haya gustado esta presentación. No cabe duda que se presentaron varios puntos importantes y que se deben de discutir en la clase. El objetivo de la presentación en general es que usted como estudiante internalice las acciones positivas que fueron dramatizadas por medio de esta obra.

Nuestro deseo es que le ayuden en su vida diaria y su lucha por desarrollarse y mejorarse por medio de la educación. Le deseamos buena suerte y progreso y estén pendientes para discutir este asunto importante.

Lesson Plan

Objectives: The learner will be able to:

1. Internalize positive feelings and affect attitude change.
2. Identify vocabulary associated with building self-esteem.
3. To stimulate conversation to address issues of self-esteem and overcoming objections.

Vocabulary:

1. frustration
2. anxiety
3. obstacle
4. barrier
5. desire
6. achievement
7. seek
8. success
9. improve
10. goals (attain goals)

Focus: Before viewing the tape, have students brainstorm reasons people give for not coming to class. What were your reasons for not coming before you decided to come to class? Jot them down on the board. As you watch the tape, what words come to mind having seen the tape? Have students write their reactions.

Explanation: After viewing the tape, there will be:

Activities:

1. A question and answer discussion period
2. Writing activitiy
3. Role-playing with a partner
4. Interviewing activity
5. Dialogue

Activity 1 Discussion Questions

1. Why was Toño negative toward education?
   a. because he wanted to retain his own language
   b. because he disliked English
   c. because he was illiterate

2. Why was Pepe so adamant in changing Toño?
   a. because he didn't like him anymore as a roommate
   b. because they had different jobs
   c. because he wanted to help him improve himself

3. What were some of the excuses Toño had in preventing him from getting an education?
   Check off the barriers that pertain to Toño.
   a. he is too old to learn
   b. he doesn't have any transportation
   c. he doesn't think he could go to classes because he doesn't have time

4. What were some of the reasons Pepe cited for the need for education?
   a. because you can learn English and forget your own language
   b. because English is spoken in this country
   c. because you can use it for your benefit

5. What was Pepe's complaint against using reading material in Spanish?
   a. because they're not as interesting
   b. because they are useless in developing your English skills
   c. because the information is outdated

6. How has Pepe's learning English impoved his situation?
   a. he holds a better paying job
   b. he has a better opportunity of getting a better job
   c. it has given him more enthusiasm and positive thinking

7. What was one of the reasons Toño decided to enroll in classes?
   a. to have more friends
   b. to write his family
   c. to understand American motives

Activity 2 List 5 goals you wish to attain in the future.

Example: I wish I could _____.
I wish I knew_____.
I wish I worked_____.
I wish I had_____.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Things to remember when pursuing a goal. (for class discussion)

1. You can overcome most barriers if you think positively.
2. They key to success is furthering your education.
3. Don't be afraid of change.
4. Put into immediate practice all that you learn.
5. Don't let embarrassment stand in your way of practicing new words.
6. Don't allow negative views to distract you from your goals.

Activity 3 Role playing

With a partner act out the following situations. One person supports the position stated and the other will try to convince his partner to the contrary.
Teacher Suggestion: Have the role playing situations written out on cards. Choose various students to present impromptu dialogues.

1. I am too old to learn.
2. Going back to school won't help me get a better job.
3. I don't have any transportation.
4. I'm too busy. I don't have time.
5. I have too many children
6. My spouse won't let me.
7. I'm too dumb.
8. I'm illiterate in my own language.
9. My friends will make fun of me.
10. Everybody speaks Spanish. Why should I learn English?

Activity 4 Choose a partner and interview a member of the class. Write down his or her responses. Then be prepared to report to the

class your findings.

1. Name 3 things you can do well.
2. Who is your hero?
3. What is something you would like to change in your life? What are your goals?
4. Are you afraid of anything?
5. What is something you can't afford yet? Is there a place you hope to visit?

Activity 5 Create a dialogue in which one student who has already enrolled in adult English classes tries to convince someone to go to school to further their education. The dialogue will be 5 minutes in length and will be presented orally to the class.

Follow-up Activities

1. Invite a guest speaker to your class to serve as a positive role model, for example, someone successful from the Hispanic community. Have students prepare questions ahead of time for the guest.

2. Make a commercial for adult education class in English.

About the Material

This material was produced as a result of our efforts to involve more people in the amnesty program specifically and in adult education generally. Past experience has shown that using drama to deliver a message gets results. This particular form of drama, the short play, is particularly effective with the Hispanic population.

To that end an acting troupe, Teatro Bracero, was engaged to produce and present short dramatic plays to our students and their friends and relatives at Community Forums in our adult education cooperative. As these proved to be extremely popular, the decision was made to video tape the performances for replay across the coop area.

As word of our efforts spread, we made the decision to provide supplementary instructional materials as well.

We know you will find the tape enjoyable, informative and provocative for your students. Please duplicate the written material as needed. We have included a sample lesson plan and several handouts which may be used as the teacher chooses.

Also included is a prepaid self addressed card for providing feedback on the material. We welcome your responses, whatever they are!

About the Author

Lupe Césares was born in south Texas in May of 1950 to a third generation migrant farm worker family. The first 15 years of his life were spent migrating from one harvest to another throughout the United States.

Césares first year-round opportunity to enroll and stay in school came in 1965, at the age of 15, when his father passed away and the family settled in the Rio Grande Valley. While in High School, he was discouraged from academics by his teachers and counselors, and encouraged to learn a trade through the Job Corp. Césares rationalized that they were being sincere in trying to help him survive, but they did not realize the depth of his desire to learn.

Then Césares learned about a GED program, especially for the children of migrant farm workers, at the University of Wisconsin. So, in 1968, he went from a vocational training institute to the university campus where he completed his GED in three months. While there, he experienced a new social awakening. He claims he fell in love with the campus environment that day, and he realized that he was finally in the right place for an education. At this point, he had a struggle within himself as to whether to pursue his college education or to return to his community where the Mexican América movement was beginning. He became politically active, co-founded the first Mexican América College in the United States, organized farm workers, and became involved in immigration law in an effort to encourage people to contribute to their community.

Cásares has a profound desire to help find solutions to social issues that prevent people from fully participating in society with their utmost abilities, and he considers education as the principal factor by which this much needed change can come about. He lectures regularly in schools to encourage students to continue their education.

Today, Cásares works at Region IV Education Service Center where he has worked with the Adult Education program as an educational specialist. Besides his regular job responsibilities, he uses non-traditional methods that have proven to be effective to reach those who have stayed away from an education. Among those are the Bracero Troupe Educational Theatre, in which he writes the material, directs and acts, and by which he delivers a message that empowers students with self-esteem, encourages self-reliances, and presents concientiazcion or conscious raising. Some of his short plays are now being filmed and introduced throughout Texas. Cásares also produces television and radio talk shows by which he promotes education. "I consider myself a professional agitator for education," he often states.

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